



The Only One Who Matters by **MarinaMango**

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Friendship, Romance

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-11-30 00:55:33

Updated: 2019-12-15 06:12:09

Packaged: 2019-12-17 14:31:24

Rating: T

Chapters: 7

Words: 13,754

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: ONGOING-Mike and Eleven hadn't seen each other in months. When they finally reunite at Thanksgiving, they further explore their relationship and together face the horrible problems of being teenagers in this fluffy fanfiction. WARNING: This fanfiction is rated T for crude language and not-quite smut. The "smut" will be VERY LIGHT AND INNOCENT because they're young kiddos

1. Chapter 1

A/N: Howdy. For those of you who do not know, my name's Marina (but my friends call me Grey). This fic will be a mileven-centric story set post season three. I'm starting things off with Thanksgiving at the Byers' new home in Maine. This first chapter may be a bit sort, for It's just an intro. I hope you guys enjoy! Note: If there are any readers from the future, and season 4 is out, beware of strong canon divergence bc this is just my outlet for hopes and dreams of what season 4 will be!

Finally. It was Thanksgiving. El was *ecstatic*. This would be the first time she would see Mike in person since the sorrowful day she moved away from Hawkins. They had called each other at least once a week during the lonely months away from each other. Although, money was tight in the Byers' home, so the calls had to be short and sweet, for long-distance calls were quite expensive. Nevertheless, Eleven and Mike had managed.

El found herself spending hours perfecting her look. She was extremely nervous to see Mike again. What if he thought she wasn't pretty anymore? What if he changed his mind about loving her. Her anxious thoughts powered her as she styled her hair at least 6 different ways until deciding to just leave it down, tossed to the side. It had grown quite a bit since moving. She tried applying a bit of makeup that Joyce had allowed her to borrow. It wasn't anything much, just lipgloss and some eye makeup.

Her dress was quite pretty, she had to admit. It was a vibrant blue-purple, made of satin. The sleeves flowed just below her shoulders, exposing her collarbone and shoulders. The torso hugged her chest, and the waist was a bit tight. The skirt was two layers of rippling fabric, the dress stopping just below her knee. Joyce had helped her pick out the dress, claiming that it looked amazing on her. El couldn't help but agree.

Her heart was beating out of her chest as she looked in the mirror for the last time. Mike and the rest of the party were due to arrive soon. They had arrived extremely late the previous night and were all so tired they ended up staying at a nearby motel.

Joyce entered the room and smiled at her adopted daughter. "They're here. You look amazing, sweetie." Joyce smiled at El's reflection, eyes swelling with pride.

El's stomach churned in nervousness, and she managed to smile. She gave a small nod at Joyce before following her out of the room. They walked down the stairs as the doorbell rang, and Joyce hurried to answer it.

Joyce opened the door, and sure enough, there they were. Mike, Dustin, Lucas, Max, and of course their ride, Steve, who had driven the kids all the way to Maine so that their parents wouldn't have to worry about paying for plane tickets.

Joyce greeted the group before stepping aside to let them in. El was waiting behind Joyce, and as she stepped aside, El was face-to-face with Mike. Her heart skipped a beat and she got chills.

` "Mike."

Mike couldn't believe it. There she was. Her. Eleven. El. 'Stunning' would be a huge understatement. Good god, El was gorgeous. She had grown a bit since the last time he saw her (although to be fair, he had too). Her hair fell in flowing waves just below her shoulders, a dazzling gold-brown. Her eyes were the same striking, curious hazel eyes. And lord, her *dress*. It was ravishing, hugging her curves and small waist. Mike didn't want to sound like a creep but her breasts had become fuller and the dress definitely made them look amazing.

Mike didn't even realize that he was staring like a dumbass, mouth half open and eyes all starry. He was too caught up in El's complete and utter beauty to move or speak or do anything. He must've been still for a while, for someone pushed him forwards towards El so that the others could enter the house. Blood pounded in his ears as a dumbfounded Mike struggled for words.

El smiled shyly up at him. "Hey."

"H-hi! Um," Mike's breath was shallow. God, El made him feel weak. "Y-you look beautiful. Really, really pretty. Like, *angelic*." He stammered, internally cringing at his choice of words.

El's cheeks turned red. "Thanks. You look good, too." She said in a quiet voice.

After a few moments of looking at each other, dumbfounded, the two simultaneously reached out and hugged. Mike let out his breath, which he didn't realize he was holding.

They pulled away from one another slightly, looking into each other's eyes before El stood on her toes and kissed him. It was magic. Mike had been deprived of El's lips for so long that the kiss felt like he was flying. It was soft and passionate. El wrapped her arms around his neck to deepen the kiss. They melted into each other, the kisses becoming better by the second. They were basically making out at this point, but before the two could get too far, someone cleared their throat.

"Could you two *please* hurry this along. I don't know about you too, but I'm starving, and I don't have the patience to watch you suck face for two hours." Lucas said.

El smiled through the kiss and they hesitantly pulled apart. She giggled a bit before letting go of Mike. She greeted the rest of her friends with a warm hug before returning to Mike's side.

Mike took her hand in his as Joyce emerged from the kitchen.

"You kids ready to eat?" she asked. They all answered enthusiastically and followed Joyce to the kitchen table. The food smelled absolutely delicious, and Mike got *very* excited to eat.

"Sit next to me?" El asked, turning towards Mike with a smile.

He grinned and nodded, looking forward to the mouth-watering meal set before them.

` A/N: Thanks for reading the chapter! I had to cut it a bit short, but I promise the next chapters will be longer. Man, this was really fluffy haha. I searched up "formal clothing in the 80s" for references for El's dress, and I combined the styles of a few that I saw on google images. was used heavily for synonyms for beautiful. I hope you enjoyed!

Forever yours,

Marina.

2. Chapter 2

A/N: Welcome to TOOWM chapter 2! This one will hopefully be longer than chapter 1, but I'm not sure because I always write the first author's note before the actual chapter. Huge, gigantic thank you to Birbbroski on Tumblr for helping edit and write! Please leave a comment/review below! I'd love to hear your suggestions and thoughts. Getting comments and reviews warms my heart and keeps me motivated to write. I hope you enjoy the chapter babes!

A/N from Birbroski: I'm being held at gunpoint with a dictionary and typewriter in front of me someone sends help :)

Steve, unfortunately, had to skedaddle after dropping the group off. Apparently, his excuse was that he had family in the area that he had to visit. While sad, the party paid no mind to it, they were too hungry to think of anything but food.

The starving group ate like beasts, too busy stuffing their faces to converse. The food could only be described as amazing. It was El's first *real* Thanksgiving. Hopper had tried to cook last year, keyword *tried* to. So after putting out a stove fire, the pair ended up eating tv dinners and watching a movie. Hopper... even memories of him harpooned El's heart. There was a bittersweet attachment to his name. She wanted to remember the good parts of him yet a large portion of her never got over his grim death. Tears started collecting in the ducts of her eyes, but before they could start to pour, someone broke the silence.

"Ms. Byers, you've really outdone yourself," Dustin mumbled through a faceful of mashed potatoes.

"*Definitely*." Will agreed. "Thanks, mom."

One thank you followed another until it seemed like a competition to express who was the most grateful, Joyce responded enthusiastically to all the high praise.

El ate until she felt like her stomach would burst. Taking a break

from eating, a wave of exhaustion washed over her. She yawned and leaned her body so that her head rested on Mike's shoulder.

"Tired?" Mike softly spoke, careful not to startle her weary state.

El weakly moved her head in a loose nodding motion. "Yes."

The group would soon migrate to the living room and watch The Neverending Story, something Dustin would probably object to but agree to stay anyways. El decided that she might turn in to her room at some point during the movie. Her energy was being sapped every second she spent trying to keep her eyes open. Never having a proper Thanksgiving before, she wasn't aware of how tired she'd be after the meal.

Once everyone had finished eating, every bloated individual brought their empty plates into the kitchen. Thanksgiving dinner certainly was a hit. Joyce announced that she would be putting a movie on and that everyone was free to join in and watch, although she herself would not be joining in. There was a lot of cleaning up to do.

"Do you need any help?" Mike willingly asked Joyce. El hid a smile. She adored everything about Mike. From the way he was always so polite to his selflessness. He always wanted the best for the people he cared about. El loved that about him especially.

"Oh, that's really sweet of you, hon." Joyce smiled at him. "I'll manage. You should hang out with your friends."

Mike nodded, El took his hand and lead him into the living room where the rest of the party was situated. They took a seat next to each other, Mike wrapping his arms around her as she hugged his middle, snuggling into him. They shared a quick, yet meaningful smile as the movie began. Lord, just seeing him smile made her heartbeat go absolutely ballistic.

....

The beginning of the movie was also the beginning of calamity. It was a hurricane Joyce had accidentally spurred. In the eye of the storm unable to leave was a petrified Dustin. His duet with Suzie in

the middle of the Battle of Starcourt had never left anyone's minds, no one in the party could ever forget the harmonies of the two. Now that the movie was playing it was fresh in the party's minds. Without realizing it, the lyrics seemed to flow out of Max and Lucas' mouths. The couple bore cheshire grins as they started singing louder. Will shook his head at the two but eagerly took the opportunity to join in.

The panic surrounding Dustin was evident, he had thought the memory had fled the group's mind like he wished every night it would. His nightmares were becoming a reality as Mike joined in. While he wasn't as loud as the other three it was obvious he was having a blast. El smiled up at him and giggled at his off-key singing.

Did El know the words? No, not really. Does that mean she didn't join in? No. She mumbled along to the melody trying to make it sound like she was slurring her words from exhaustion. Whatever lines she did know were more coherent and easier to pick up but just as quiet.

Dustin groaned while plugging his ears, he refused to willingly listen to his own swan song. The makeshift chorus soon died down as the movie's plot began. Dustin sighed in relief, but many of the party members still had sly grins on their faces.

The kids watched the movie without saying much. There was an occasional whisper and comment here and there, but other than that they watched the movie without saying anything. For the time being, Dustin was safe from the storm.

Mike zoned in and out as the movie went on. Much like El, Thanksgiving dinner had zapped a large portion of his energy into the abyss. He would be ready to hit the hay soon. Mike jumped back from his thoughts as he felt El gently tugging on his sleeve. He looked over at her, worry plastering his face.

"Mike," she whispered gently. "Can we go to bed? I'm sleepy."

He nodded. "Yeah, of course. Me too." He gave her a soft smile before he was tugged up out of their seat on the couch. Hand in hand, El lead him out of the living room. He glanced back at the group, seeing Max roll her eyes.

"God, do they have to do this in the middle of a movie?" Mike heard her grumble. He ignored Max's protest, heart racing as he and El made their way up the stairs and down the hall to her room. The door swung open and as they entered Mike took the opportunity to look around.

Her room was a near replica to the one she had in Hopper's Cabin. The walls were a similar shade of blue-green, and some of the furniture had been moved here as well, such as her dresser and nightstand. Mike spotted a record player sitting on top of her dresser, the record player Hopper kept at the cabin.

A pang of sadness echoed through his consciousness. He and Hopper never really got along, but in his mind, he knew that Hopper had meant near the world to El. Hopper was the first parental figure in her life that made her feel loved. Hopper was the father figure she needed, he was someone who made her feel cared for. In fear of making her upset, Mike didn't bring him up so instead he carefully sat down next to her on El's bed.

Said girl looked over at him and offered a small smile. His heart tried to leap out of his chest. She was so gorgeous. "I'm glad you're here" She murmured.

Mike could practically feel his pulse through his veins. "Me too. I really, really missed you" he said, "I wish you didn't live so far away."

El wrapped her arms around his neck, looking into his eyes as she pulled them into an embrace. "Yeah."

All thoughts of being sleepy were abandoned and forgotten as he prepared for what he knew was coming. After a few long, excruciating moments of just gazing into each other's eyes, their lips finally met.

Mike gently wrapped his arms around her waist as she shifted her body to face directly towards him. The kiss was as good as, no, *better* than the one they had shared before dinner. Mike couldn't even fathom how El was this perfect. He guiltily admitted to himself that it was sort of nice to not have Hopper constantly yelling at them to quit making out. Now there was nothing holding them back. It was both

terrifying and exhilarating at the same time.

Eventually, Mike and El could faintly hear the movie finish as the rest of the party made their way to where they would be sleeping. An exhausted Dustin trudged down the hall towards Will's room, where he would sleep in a sleeping bag for the night. Through the gap between the wall and door, he could get a rather disgusting view of Mike and El mid-make out session.

"Ugh, Jesus. Close the damn door will you?"

El giggled, getting up momentarily to close the door fully. She returned to Mike to kiss the night away.

A/N: I hope you enjoyed the chapter! I kinda keep switching to Mike's perspective because I'm bad at being hetero and me and Mike both have a burning love for El but I'll try to switch to El's perspective at some point during fluffy parts. Once again, TYSM TO BIRBBROSKI ON TUMBLR YOU BETTER GO FOLLOW HER RIGHT THE HELL NOW BC SHE'S A HOMIE. If her family is reading this, her ransom is 7 grand thank you.

Forever yours,

Marina (Grey)

A/N from Birbroski: the sequel, I'm but an angst filled teenager who knows how to use fancy words :) but um props to the actual author Grey because I can't come up with ideas for anything like that's hard so go be nice to her or something cause she's the best homie there be, also I'm still being held at gunpoint please pay the 7k

3. Chapter 3

A/N: Hola! Welcome to chapter 3. Like I promised, this chapter will have some fluff in El's perspective, especially towards the end! Ooh also, a quick announcement: I am accepting suggestions or prompts for this story in my inbox on Tumblr. My user is marina-the-obsessive-soup. Just leave something in my asks! Once again, thanks to Birbbroski on Tumblr for help! Without further ado my babes, here is chapter 3.

A/N from Brokebirb: yo shout out to ur mom for paying my ransom like big ups on that, not gonna lie I didn't have as much to do with this chapter because I was busy scrambling to finish an essay I forgot also I'm not good at editing fluff stuff because I hate everyone but yaddah yaddah chapter 3 follow Grey hope you enjoy also Max is genuinely one of my favorite characters so don't even me for writing her like some omniscient impending force

El awoke that morning to the sound of birds chirping a melodious song. She wasn't sure what time it was, and frankly, she couldn't be bothered to find out. All that she wanted to focus on was the feeling of Mike's arms around her, her back to his front as he held onto her. She subconsciously listened to the sound of his breathing, the birds dulling in the background. Each inhale and exhale seemed like a soft melody almost lulling her back to sleep. Everything was calm, there was finally a serene moment in what felt to be their ever chaotic lives. As much as she'd love to stay there for eternity, she knew that they needed to wake up. She sighed softly, not wanting to accidentally wake him up. It was just so *nice* laying here with him. Maybe if she closed her eyes for just a few more seconds...

The door swung open and Max walked into the room. Max held no sympathy, pity, or any feeling of regret in her being. She was there, it was to be known. The two comfortable teenagers lying peacefully in bed were going to be aware she was there whether they liked it or not. El's eyes reluctantly cracked open at Max's looming appearance. "Max?" She seemed to be already dressed, wearing a long-sleeved striped shirt and overalls, her hair pulled back into a braid. Max

made her way towards the bed, somehow power walking despite it being near three feet away. She grabbed El by the arm and yanked her out of the comfortable bed.

El stumbled to her feet, immediately wanting to scurry back to the bed with Mike for the rest of the day. Said boy was now struggling to sit up in a started and confused state. Words aren't a tired person's forte, this was evident by Mike stammering out confused incoherent, maybe English.

"C'mon El. We're going Black Friday shopping." Max stated. There was no defying her, for she was determined to get those 30% off deals. Max scanned El, noticing that she was still wearing the dress from last night. El never got a chance to change into pajamas the previous night. She and Mike had basically made out until they were too exhausted to continue, dropping like flies onto the bed. Max shook her head. "My God, you guys are ridiculous."

She sighed, leading El out of the room, who was looking back at a still half-asleep, confused Mike. El let out a soft laugh at the sight of his adorable, perplexed face. She turned her attention back towards Max, who held a bundle of El's clothes under one arm. "I came into your room to grab a change of clothes for you earlier this morning. If I let you change in there, god knows what you and Mike would do. We'd be late for the mall." El's face turned pink at Max's comment, but before she could reply, El was handed the clothes and pushed into the bathroom with the door closing behind her.

El thought Max had done a good job picking out El's outfit. Other than her undergarments, the pile included a short-sleeved burgundy shirt with bright orange polka-dots, a simple black belt, denim shorts, and a light jacket. Max seemed to have forgotten how cold Maine could get, especially so late during autumn. El would just grab a warmer jacket on the way out the door.

El exited the bathroom, changed into her clean clothes. "I need to put my dress in my room," El said, hoping it was a good enough excuse to say goodbye to Mike. Max crossed her arms, smirking. "Alright, just don't take too long"

El smiled, walking back down the hallway and gingerly opening the

door to her room. Mike sat crossed-legged on the bed, still in a sleepy daze. He blinked twice and slowly looked over at El as she entered the room. "Hi." She said, containing giggles. Mike's hair was all over the place. It was messy, yet adorable. "Hi," Mike mumbled back, scratching his head.

"Sorry about Max," she chuckled, "she's taking me shopping for..." El took a moment to recall what the event was called. "Black Friday? She wants us to get to the mall early."

Mike nodded, collapsing back into bed. "I figured." Mike yawned, watching as El draped her dress over her desk chair. "I like your outfit." he complimented. El gently smiled. "Thank you," she replied.

"*EL!*" Max boomed from the hallway. She was growing impatient. It was growing impatient. El glanced nervously behind her shoulder not wanting to find out what a cranky Max was like. She quickly padded over to the bed and pulled Mike's face towards hers before giving him a soft kiss. After letting him go, El walked over to the hallway, glancing back at Mike to wave goodbye. And then they were on their merry way.

....

Joyce was nice enough to drive the two to the mall, saying how she also had some shopping to do. El was giddy with excitement. She had only gone shopping with Max once before, and it had been a blast. When they arrived at the mall, Joyce let them know that they were free to roam, and the shopping began.

El and Max went into a ton of stores, searching through the clothing racks for good deals and cute finds. Sure, the mall was crowded, but that didn't stop the two friends from having a great time. They grabbed anything that looked good, bright neon jackets, loose-fitting long-sleeved shirts with panels of fabric ruffling along the sleeves, plaid skirts, jeans. They settled into a fitting room to try things on, asking for each other's opinion.

"So how are things with you and Mike?" Max asked as El tried on a denim jacket.

El looked over at her friend, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "Good. I missed him a lot..." she paused, "I missed all of you a lot. The kids here are not as nice." El thought about her struggles in school. She had gotten some help from Joyce, Will, and Johnathan to help her catch up in school, but it wasn't enough. She still struggled a lot with her classes, constantly getting teased by other students. Getting called names. She thought of the whispers she could hear as gossip spread. *'I think she's a dyke. God, what a weirdo.'* *'Jennifer told me she came from a mental hospital.'*

The rumors damaged her confidence a bit more than she would have liked. She hadn't made many friends here. She always sat alone at lunch. Sometimes the group of outcasts let her sit with them, even though she never really spoke. They were her fellow losers. Getting shunned by the popular kids.

Max looked at her with sympathy. "School can be tough. I'm here for you though. If you need someone to talk to, I'm only a call away." El smiled and nodded.

When the pair was done trying on clothes they gathered the things they wanted to buy and walked out of the fitting room. They got in the checkout line, which was quite long. It seemed to be moving fast, and El was patient, so she didn't mind. After waiting in line for about 25 minutes, they finally paid for their new clothes and exited the store.

El quickly looked up at a clock placed on the wall. It read 2-1-0. Joyce had asked them to meet her out in the parking lot at 2-2-0. Meaning they still had a whole ten minutes to kill. They decided to walk around a bit and just talk.

"How is life in Hawkins?"

"Ugh, pretty much the same. It's boring without you." Max replied. "How's Maine?"

"Okay," El replied with a shrug. Her new life away from Hawkins wasn't exactly ideal. ideal. She was a billion miles away from Mike and her friends. She was only allowed to call once a week, which was virtually torture, and to make it all worse, school was dreadful. She

tried to look at the positive things. Maine was a beautiful state full of mountains, lakes, and rivers. She had a loving family and a safe home. At least there weren't any demogorgons here.

"Let's head to the parking lot. It's almost 2:20." Max stated.

The two friends made their way over to the parking lot and met up with Joyce. They piled into the car and began driving back home.

"Did you girls have fun? Looks like you bought a lot of stuff."

El smiled and nodded. "Yes," she looked over at Max, "it was really fun."

....

The arrived at the house in a quick matter of time, singing along to songs on the radio. Gosh, El was so happy that her friends were here. El opened the door to her house, carrying 3 bags full of clothes from different stores. She walked into the living room to find Mike and Will lounging on the couch, watching *Cheers*!.

Mike's face lit up when he saw El walk in. El smiled happily, setting her bags down on the coffee table in front of the couch and walking towards Mike, who had stood up. He brought her close to him and kissed her, making her heart combust. She took his face in her hands, pulling him so that the two were pressed together. El and Mike just happened to be blocking Will's view of the tv.

"Uhm, guys? I can't see the um-" El and Mike were oblivious that anyone was talking to them. Will sighed and shook his head, looking down to the floor before standing up and leaving the room.

The two collapsed onto the couch, the kiss coming to an end as they giggled like 5-year-olds. They barely paid attention to what was happening onscreen, to absorbed into looking at each other. The rest of the world seemed to melt away as Mike looked at her like she was the only one who mattered. And as their lips met again for another passionate kiss, Eleven Hopper truly was the only one who mattered.

....

At some point towards the end of dinner later that day, Dustin and newly-returned Steve were going on and on, debating about something. El wasn't sure what. They were using some words she didn't quite understand, and her mind was elsewhere. She thought about her earlier conversations with Max. El had been rambling on about her feelings towards Mike, sparing no detail. She talked about his bravery. His selflessness. Not to mention that he was an *amazing* kisser.

'If you really feel that way about him, you should tell him. Boys like it when you talk about why you like them.' Max had said.

God, El just wanted to drag Mike upstairs, vomit her feelings onto him, and then kiss him until she ran out of breath. And then kiss him again. El smiled a bit at the thought, trying to hide it in case someone asked her about it.

'Just take him into your room after dinner or something. It'll be sweet.' This would be a great opportunity to do it. Mostly everyone was invested in the heated debate between Steve and Dustin. El looked over at Mike, who's hand she was holding under the table. He seemed a bit bored.

Heart racing, she tucked a loose strand of hair behind her ear and whispered in Mike's ear. "Can we go up to my room? I want to talk to you." Mike quickly nodded, all of his attention resting on her. "Yeah, for sure."

Once everyone was distracted, the pair slipped out of their seats at the table, quietly padding up the stairs and into her room. They sat across to each other crossed-legged on the bed. A familiar position.

"Mike..." She didn't know where to begin. He looked at her, concern covering his face. What if he thought she was breaking up with him again? Maybe this was a mistake. "I think you're perfect." That was a good way to begin, right? "You..." It began. She had no control over what she was saying now. Her heart was just pouring out emotions and they were escaping out of her mouth. "You're just so amazing. I love how you put others before yourself. I love that you never miss our weekly call. I love how brave you are. I would do anything for you. You make me feel like... *everything*." She took his hands in hers.

"I love you."

Of course, this wasn't the first time she had told Mike she loved him but combined with everything else she said, Mike was stunned. Speechless. He struggled to find words. "El, I-" he stammered, "I love you too. I-"

El silenced his stuttering with a kiss, sitting up on her knees and wrapping her arms around his neck. Mike gratefully kissed back, smiling through it. Huh. Her plan of spilling out emotions followed by making out was working. At this point, her mind was too focused on their making out to focus on anything but *him*. Mike. He was all hers, and she didn't have a care in the world.

A/N: Aight that just about wraps up chapter 3! It was a bit longer than chapters 1 and 2 and it takes up like half of my google doc so that pretty funny. Although Broski didn't have such a big part in writing this chapter, still props to her for writing Max awesomely. I think next chapter I wanna introduce some kind of fair or carnival. I think I'd be fun and be a good opportunity for mike to reciprocate his feelings for El, but then I'd be repeating themes from season 3 like i did with the mall this chapter. Let me know what you guys think tho

Forever yours,

Marina (Grey)

4. Chapter 4

A/N: Greetings my children. Welcome back to everyone's favorite Mileven fanfic fluff source, TOOWM. Sorry for the delay in updating! School has made my life kinda busy. Thanks to wonderful responses to my last A/N (I'm talkin' bout you Luna0603 on fanfic .net ily3), I will be including a fair/carnival in this chapter! Be prepared for a lot of adorable fluff in this chapter. Their romantic gestures will begin to advance from here on out, hence the M rating, but there won't be any like actual smut or anything that implies that like certain sexual activities have been performed bc these kids are like 14, y'know. Anyways, this A/N is getting pretty long, so here's chapter 4!

Mike and El had stayed up for a couple more hours after that. They were both in an *amazing* mood, and the two shared dumb, silly jokes and funny stories with each other before resorting to making out again.

Now, they lay in bed facing each other. El's knees were tucked into her chest so that she was basically curled up into a ball, Mike's arms wrapped around her so that he was holding her just so. They were both quite tired at this point, and after a few more moments of snuggling into each other, they turned out the lights and went to sleep.

....

Mike woke sometime that morning, the sound of some obnoxious trashbag moving their lawn making him retreat from his peaceful slumber with El. Luckily, El had not been disturbed by the loud roaring of the machine. She slept serenely in his arms, the ghost of a smile still plastered on her face.

Mike was still trying to process the events of last night. God, he felt like a dumbass after El had said all that stuff about him. His brain felt mushy and could barely scrape up enough common sense to say I love you back. When she kissed him though, shit, it was like kissing had a whole other meaning. It felt different. It felt like she was expressing more things in that kiss than she could ever express with

words. It was beautiful. Fuck, she was *beautiful*.

He gazed at her in wonder, watching the slow rise and fall of her chest. He thought about her. What they had gone through together. He thought back to the fateful night he had found her alone in the woods, rain pouring down on them. He thought about those many months of loneliness where he thought El was gone forever, only sometimes feeling her presence when trying to reach her on his supercomm. He thought about her return. How they became closer than they ever had, officially being together in a relationship. He thought about her breaking up with him, while in reality they never truly were apart. There was an urge to still be there to help El. To catch her when she fell. He still wanted to be there for her even after she had 'dumped his ass' because she was *that awesome*. He loved her so much.

His thoughts were interrupted as El's eyes slowly fluttered open. She slowly looked up at Mike who soon realized he was staring at her like an idiot. El grinned at him with a sleepy, far-away look before snuggling herself deeper into his arms, practically melting into him.

No matter how comfortable they were, the couple knew they had to get up. And they did. Eventually. It took around 20 minutes for them to both fully wake up and gain enough brainpower to struggle out of bed. Thankfully, Max wasn't there to interrupt their morning cuddles.

Once they were up and about, Mike grabbed some clean clothes from his bag. "I'll go change in the bathroom," he stated, wanting to keep awkwardness to a minimum. After changing into his clean clothes, Mike met up with El at the top of the stairs and walked down to the kitchen, where Joyce and Johnathan were preparing pancakes for breakfast.

Mike and El took their seats at the table, where Lucas and Dustin were already seated, licking their lips in hunger. The rest of the party came downstairs a few at a time, all looking rather sleepy but ready to start the day.

One by one they were served a steaming plate of pancakes, everyone digging in hungrily. Joyce smiled at the large group of kids seated at her kitchen table. "So kids, our town always kicks off the wintertime

with a carnival. They call it Snow Fest, and it's opening today. I'd be happy to drive you all there if you'd be up for going! That way you're not cooped up inside all day." she announced.

The party chatted amongst themselves. A carnival. Sounded fun! He turned his head towards El for her input. "Carnival?" she asked, clearly confused with her head tilted to the side.

Oh, right. Last summer they were too busy fighting the Mind Flayer to actually attend the 4th of July carnival that had taken place. She probably had no idea what it was. "It's kinda just a big celebration with a ton of rides and unhealthy, sugary or fried foods. They're really fun! You'd definitely like it." he smiled at her. She nodded her head in approval.

"I'd want to go. Beats sitting here watching tv all day." Max said.

Lucas looked over at his girlfriend, clearly wanting to agree with whatever she said. "Yeah, I think so too."

The rest of the group agreed to hang out at the carnival, and the matter was settled.

.....

The group couldn't all fit into one car, so half went in Steve's, the other half in Joyce's. Mike and El had settled into Steve's sparking hot rod he had got only a few weeks ago. It looked pretty cool, but none of the party was too interested in cars, so they didn't seem as excited as Steve when he bought it.

They piled into the car, Steve driving, Johnathan in the passenger's seat, and El, Mike, and Will in the back. They began their drive. The car was a convertible, so they kept the roof up despite the cold temperatures. The air was crisp and smelled of dew as yellow morning light lit up the landscape of almost-bare trees.

They put on the radio, a familiar tune played, but Mike didn't quite recognize what it was called. He sang along nonetheless, his tone-deaf voice ringing out into the open air. El giggled and smiled at him, making his heart glow.

"Wheeler shut it already. Everyone in the damn town can hear you." Steve complained.

Mike was reluctant at first but soon quieted down, still grinning. They made their way down the winding road. El wrapped her arms around his middle, resting her head on his shoulder in her clingy, adorable way. Mike looked over at his girlfriend and smiled, completely at ease.

....

They arrived at the carnival a few minutes later, where it was situated at a park. The rest of the party met up with them after being dropped off by Joyce, and they together got in line to buy tickets. They didn't wait in line long, and after paying, the party entered the carnival. They split into their respective groups of two, Lucas with Max, Will with Johnathan, Steve with Dustin, and of course Mike with El.

Mike and El walked together through the carnival. He watched El as she hugged his arm, gazing in wonderment at the food stands and rides.

"Mike," she said softly to him. He looked over at her and she pointed to a stand. "What's *that*?" El was pointing to the cotton candy booth, staring at the wefts of fluffy pink sugar cloud being served to carnival-goers. Mike smiled.

"Oh, that's cotton candy. It's lie flavored sugar strands that are really fluffy and kinda melt in your mouth. We should get some!"

El nodded. They bought two cotton candies, Mike fishing for money out of his pocket as El watched the man effortlessly spin the paper cone as puffs of sugar began to collect on it. Mike places his money on the counter and takes the cotton candy handing one cone to El as they began walking away.

El studied the cotton candy carefully, looking at it closely, prodding it with her fingers as Mike gratefully dug into his. He watched her observe her cotton candy, a small smile on his face. "It won't bite you El, just eat some," he said, mouth full of the strawberry-flavored

candy floss.

She looked over at him with uncertainty before tearing off a piece of the cotton candy. She popped the clump into her mouth, and her face lit up. She grabbed more as quick as she could, stuffing her face with the sugar. "See? I knew you'd love it" Mike smiled at her.

They finished their cotton candy quickly, throwing out the cones before joining hands again and continuing to explore the carnival. "No way!" Mike smiled, seeing one of his favorite rides up ahead. "They have UFO here? C'mon El, we got to ride this. You'll have the time of your life."

....

The couple had been exploring the carnival for a long while now. It was about 4:30 and thanks to winter, the sun hung low in the sky. It was probably going to set soon. This was his chance, His chance to tell her *everything*.

He didn't want it to seem like Mike felt the exact same way towards El as she did towards him. Things had been kind of open-ended last night. Mike had acted like a complete and utter buffoon after El had said all those things. He wanted El to know that he loved everything about her. Her beauty. Her badass, yet innocent personality. Her adorableness. He would say it all on the Ferris wheel, the most romantic attraction in the whole place.

Now they were waiting in line. The wheel was fairly large, but it ran slow and there were a lot of people who wanted to ride it. El clung to his arm, breaths slow and tired. They had had a long, adventurous day of exploration. Mike's heart was racing as he prepared exactly what he would say to her in his mind. Soon, they were at the front of the line. The woman at the entrance took their tickets and invited them on the ride.

....

They took their seats in the ferris wheel car. Rather than sitting across from him, El sat down next to mike on the bench, looking at him with a smile as the ride began moving. All she wanted was to be

near him and watch the sunset.

Mike looked at her. "Hey, uh, I'm sorry about what I did last night. Well I mean I guess what I *didn't* do." He scratched the back of his neck.

El looked at him, confused. She thought things had gone amazing the previous night. Had she misinterpreted something? Maybe she wasn't remembering correctly. "What do you mean?"

"I mean you said all those things about me and I guess my brain didn't know how to respond and I just kinda looked at you like an idiot instead of..."

"Mike, instead of what?" she was a bit worried.

"El, I love you so, so much."

"I love you t-"

He stopped her. "No. No. Just let me have this." he said. El nodded, heart racing at his sudden urgency and determination. "El you're amazing. Your badass and beautiful and adorable and I love *all of you*. Like I don't even really understand how someone as amazing as you would feel all those things about me. El, I want to be with you all the time. Like, so much it *hurts*. Hawkins is torture without you. It's not home without you." he was holding her hands in his. El was on the verge of tears as he continued. "El I want to be with you and love you every day. Even after the day I die. And the day after that. El I love you so much."

He had finished his ramblings the way he had started. El was holding back tears as they collected in her eyes. She wiped them away with a small snuffle. One thing bothered her though. What about her powers? Without her powers, she was basically none of the things Mike had described to her. She dropped the thought as he took her in his arms and kissed her

They eventually released the kiss as they approached the summit. El was still quite speechless. Things were basically a replay of what had happened last night, only their roles had been switched.

El had her arms wrapped around Mike's middle as he hugged her close to them. The sunset was beautiful, cascading rays of red, orange, pink, and yellow light washing over them. El smiled at the sight of the sun slowly crawling out of the sky, behind the dark silhouettes of hills and mountain peaks.

El sat up a bit to kiss Mike again, letting the feeling of it all wash over her. Their lips melted and swerved together as they made out, each kiss more meaningful than the last. By the time they made it to the bottom of the wheel, they were sloppily making out, El's arms wrapped around Mike's neck. They were too absorbed in the kiss to even realize that they were being shown off the ride. They were eventually grabbed by the arms by one of the ride workers and practically thrown out of the ferris wheel car.

Before they could get into more trouble, the couple jogged away from the ride, hand in hand. They were both laughing and giggling like idiots as they made their way farther and farther from the bustling action of the carnival. They were far from done with each other.

The final lights of sunset illuminated the sky as dusk fell upon them. They settled underneath a tree, El sitting with her back against the tree trunk. They continued their makeout session, kisses becoming frantic. Oh, how El wanted to make up for all the missed time with Mike. They kissed like there was no tomorrow.

El suddenly became hyperaware of everything around her. Her senses felt stronger. She could hear every bug chirp, every leaf fall, every breath Mike took as he peppered her jawline with kisses. The air smelled of pine and chillness. It was cold out, but El felt like she was on fire. No, she felt like she *was* the fire. Each muscle in her body seemed relaxed, yet ecstatic at the same time, tingles spreading through her nervous system as Mike kissed her neck softly.

God, everything was perfect. She couldn't think straight, the fabrics of her mind but a jumble of thoughts about Mike. Her feelings about Mike. Words didn't make sense right now, but as Mike kissed her she felt like everything made sense.

Mike brought to her a reality in which her life wasn't hell. A world in which she wasn't taunted at school every day for being slow. A world

where her horrid memories of twelve years in the lab seemed to melt away. Papa did not exist in this world, nor did the bullies at school. The only thing that really existed was her and Mike, and that was all she really needed to be happy.

A/N: Whoo! Things got a little steamy at the end there. Once again, dearest apologies for the delay in posting. Now that school has started up again, ya'll may have to wait like 2-3 days for a new chapter to be posted, maybe occasionally more now that midterms are coming up. Please leave a review/comment! Once again, I am accepting prompts/ideas for this story (preferably on my Tumblr, [marina-the-obsessive-soup](#), but you can leave something in the comments and reviews if that works better). Thanks for reading on and being patient!

Forever yours,

Marina.

5. Chapter 5

A/N: Howdy folks! Welcome to chapter 5. Before you read this chapter's A/N, here's an important announcement! I have a Discord server now! The server will mostly be about ST, but you can talk about pretty much anything you want. Plus, I have custom emojis! The link won't show up on fanfiction .net so if you are reading this there and want to join my server, go to Wattpad and you can find the story with the link there. /invite/9e9Var If you have any problems getting in, let me know. This will be the last chapter of arc one of this story because it takes place the Sunday (and Saturday night) after Thanksgiving. Arc 2 will be fairly long because it will take place during winter break in Hawkins! Let me know if y'all want a chapter for kinda how things go after Thanksgiving but before winter break, kinda like an arc 1.5. If so, what would you want to see? Anyways, prompt submissions and ideas are always welcome! Without further ado, here's chapter 5, jam-packed with fluff.

El and Mike eventually snuck back into the crowd after a while of kissing and snuggling underneath the tree. As they walked, the memory of their heavy makeout session was still fresh in her mind. The thought of it sent warm tingles through her heart and down to her toes. El was suddenly being pulled by Mike to a nearby booth.

"Where are we going?"

"I wanna win you a stuffed animal," he said. They stopped at a booth. It had rows and rows of multicolored prongs, and baskets of small plastic hoops at the front. Hung at the top railing of the tent were stuffed animals in bright neon colors. She looked up in awe, wanting to touch the soft-looking fur of each one.

A tired employee stood behind the counter, shoulders slumped. "Three bucks a basket, kid." Mike nodded, placing a handful of bills on the counter. The worker took the three dollars, sliding a basket of 4 hoops towards him. Mike tossed one hoop. It bounced off of a prong and dropped to the floor.

Mike grabbed another ring, stepping back and lowering his stance.

He tossed it again, but alas, the ring simply bounced off of the prong. He grabbed the third hoop, clearly determined to get it this time. He threw it, but the throw was not the winning one. Before Mike could grab the last hoop, El grabbed his arm.

"Mike, could I try?" she asked softly. He nodded, handing her the last ring.

Okay. She could do this. She did not have her powers, but maybe if she had that sort of mindset, she could successfully throw the hoop onto a prong. Yes. She would be able to control the hoop if she convinced her mind that she was able to.

I have complete control over where this hoop will go. I will throw it, and it will land where I want it to land. She thought to herself. She took a deep breath. If she thought too hard about it, it wouldn't work. She would just have to throw it, and it would land on a prong, simple as that.

She threw it with certainty, and sure enough, it looped around a yellow prong with a satisfying noise. She half-expected for her nose to start bleeding, but when she reached her arm towards her face, there was no blood. She had thrown the hoop on her own and it worked.

"Yeah, El!" Mike threw his hands up in celebration. The employee signed.

"Congratulations. Pick a prize." he deadpanned.

El surveyed the stuffed animals hung at the top of the tent. She pointed at a blue-purple teddy bear, and the worker got it down with a hook, and she took it.

El handed the stuffed bear to Mike. "Here. Take it home to remember me by when you miss me." she smiled, which he returned adorably, and she stood on her toes and kissed him on the cheek.

They locked arms, Mike linking one arm with El's and holding the stuffed bear with the other, and began walking towards the exit of the carnival, where they would meet up with the rest of the party.

They met outside with the rest of the party.

"*Finally*," Steve groaned, stuffing his hand in his pockets and walking towards them. "We've been waiting forever. Let's go."

Steve, Johnathan, and Will walked towards the car with El and Mike, leaving the rest of the party to wait for Joyce. As they climbed into the car, Steve glanced over at the stuffed bear in Mike's hand.

"Hey Mike, aren't you a little old for stuffed animals?"

Mike rolled his eyes, strapping himself in the seatbelt. "Oh, don't be a dick, Steve," he said. He seemed to be getting a bit defensive about it. El blushed slightly. "It's none of your business."

After a short, quiet car ride, they eventually made it back home. El was glad to be back, yet the carnival had just been so *fun*, that she wanted to go back. She would have to ask Joyce if they could go again next year, preferably with Mike. It was still relatively early when they got home, so the group settled down in the living room to watch tv.

It was later that day and El now stood alone in her room, changing into pajamas. Her mind was a warm fuzzy haze of events at that moment as she thought about the day. She slipped off her shirt, momentarily gazing at her exposed torso that lay underneath. The skin along her chest was light and smooth, untouched by the sun. She wore a simple tan bra as well. Her breasts weren't anything much. They weren't horrible but compared to other girls at school, they were nothing. That was okay though, right? Max always said her legs looked good. They were long.

She stopped looking at herself, clipping off her bra and pulling on her pajama top. When she finished getting changed she sat on her bed, ready to collapse into Mike's arms when he entered. Her eyelids were heavy and her mind yearned for a break, yet her heart somehow had a desire to just make out with Mike all over again.

El was snapped out of her daze as she heard a knock on the door. She sleepily mumbled a 'Come in,'. Now changed Mike opened the door to her room, closing it behind him and smiling at her. El scooped over

on the bed to Make room for mike, hugging her knees to her chest. Mike hopped onto the bed, looking just as tired as El felt.

El scooped towards him, wrapping her arms around his middle as they lay down, snuggling up under the covers. A wave of sadness washed over her as she remembered that Mike was leaving tomorrow morning. She wouldn't see him for *three whole weeks*. Now that she had finally been reunited with him after months of being apart she didn't think she could stand to be without him for more than a second.

She sighed. She would have to go back to school on Monday. She would have to leave her perfect world with Mike. Her perfect world where the word "school" didn't even exist. Mike had pulled her from her gray reality into a spectacle of colors, stretching to the edges of space and time. She wished she lived in that world all the time. El figured she could at least enjoy it for the moments she could.

She tilted her head up to kiss Mike, feeling tingles go down to her feet once again. "I don't want you to go again." she murmured to him once they released the kiss, their faces still pressed together.

"I know. I do too. But you're coming to Hawkins in three weeks! God, I can't wait to show you everything that's changed." he smiled his big goofy smile.

"I'm going home," she said, smiling softly. Home. Hawkins was, and forever will be her home. Yes, it was the place where she was kept in a lab for most of her life, but it was also the place she met Mike and the rest of her family. Joyce was trying to escape the bad memories she had left in Hawkins but didn't consider the good memories that made Hawkins their home, leaving El to scrape herself together and leave her life behind.

"Home." Mike returned the soft smile. Their lips met again, and the warm tingles returned as the kiss deepened, El's arms wrapping instinctively around his neck. His hands somehow fond her hips as he pulled her closer to him.

El smiled through the kiss, never wanting the moment to end. She would kill to just live like this forever. She and Mike curled up in her

bed, kissing each other wildly. Her breath seemed to be getting a bit fast and her heart felt like it was about to overflow. They released the kiss momentarily, Mike moving to kiss her neck like earlier. The sensation set her nerves on fire. El tilted her head so that most of her neck was exposed. Her mind was completely blank.

As much as they wanted to lay there and kiss each other all night, sleep called from the depths of their minds, luring them in with promises of peaceful slumber. They eventually grew too tired to kiss anymore, allowing the dark blanket of sleep to wash over them.

.....

Mike awoke that morning, the feeling of dread heavy in his stomach. He was leaving today. Trying his best not to disturb a peaceful El, he glanced at his watch to find that it was 10:30. They were leaving in thirty minutes. He and Ek would have to wake up.

"El, c'mon. I have to get up and pack." he said quietly to her.

Her eyes open very slowly and uncertainly, adjusting to the light of the room. She looked at him with great sorrow, making his heart sink. "Stay here. Maybe they will forget you and leave and you can stay."

Mike sighed sadly. He eventually convinced her to get out of bed, and they separately changed. Mike packed his bag halfheartedly. He would be dying to see her in the next few weeks. They both ventured downstairs together where everyone seemed to be finishing up breakfast.

"Mornin. You missed breakfast." Steve said, looking up from a plate of scraps.

Mike sighed, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. "I see that," he responded unenthusiastically. "It's fine. I'm not hungry anyway."

"Great, because we gotta motor if we wanna get home at a reasonable hour."

Once everyone finished breakfast and gathered their bags, they were all standing by the front door, hugging goodbyes. El pulled him into a

tight hug, crying slightly. Mike gave her a quick kiss. "It's okay. We'll see each other in three weeks, okay?"

El sniffled, brushing away tears. "Three weeks." she gave him a small, sad smile. "Promise?"

Mike returned the sad smile. "Promise."

El eventually let go of him, stepping away so that the rest of the party could exit. Mike was the last person in the group, and he glanced over his shoulder to the inside of the house. Joyce, Will, Johnathan, and El stood there, looking a bit sad. El gave him one last shy wave, and they shared a look. Mike turned back around and closed the door behind him, walking out into the crisp morning.

A/N: Sorry this chapter was on the shorter side! I'll make up for it in arc 2 I promise. Let me know if y'all want a quick chapter in between arcs 1 and 2 for angst and stuff. Hope you enjoyed!

Forever yours,

Marina.

6. Chapter 6

A/N: Welcome my children to Arc 1.5. A time of great suffering for our precious children. This chapter will take place a week after the last chapter, and will be relatively short. I'm trying to keep the timeline of this story lining up with real-time. Anyways, my discord server is still open so go find the link on last chapter's A/N (only shows on wattpad, not fanfiction .net) Come chat with me! Ask me questions and talk to me about this fic! Make new friends! Anyways, grab a blanket and some espresso, and enjoy the suffering and depresso.

His first week back from Maine was as expected. Hell. God, he hated waking up without El. He hated going about his had without El. He hated going to bed without El. She was his life. He completed his schoolwork with minimal effort, which probably hurt his grades, but his mind seemed to always be somewhere else during school. His dreams were filled with images of her.

It was a week after the day he left Maine, and Mike was sitting by the phone, waiting for El to call. He had been anticipating the call all week.

The phone rang and Mike jumped. He quickly picked up the phone "Hello? El?"

"Mike?" she said. He smiled at the sound of her voice. "Hi."

"Hey," he replied. "I *really* miss you."

"I miss you, too," she replied. Her voice sounded quiet and scratchy as if she had been crying. Maybe the connection was off.

"We only have to wait a couple more weeks. I don't know how I'll survive."

"Yeah." No, something was off. She was usually more excited during their phone calls.

"Hey, are you alright?"

He heard her sniff before clearing her throat. "Yes. I'm good."

"You sure?"

"Yes, Mike. I'm fine. I just wish you were here." Before he could reply, El continued. "Hey, Mom says I need to go. I love you, bye."

"I love you t-" she had already hung up.

.....

El was anything but fine. After hanging up she slid down the wall, sitting on the floor and tucking her knees to her chest as the tears spilled out.

Friends don't lie. A voice chanted in her head. She had lied to Mike. She was horrible. School was horrific. Within a week gossip had turned to full-on active bullying directly to her.

Kids would shove her in the halls. They would walk up to her lonely table at lunch and sputter horrible words into her brain. *Your nothing but a freak. A retard. You're slowing the class down.* The kids at the outcast table empathized with her. They would try to comfort her, but it wasn't enough. *Whining bitch.*

It wasn't enough to keep her from wondering. What if Mike one day realized that she was all of those things the kids said about her. She was slow in school. *Nothing* made sense. Mike was smart. He wouldn't want his girlfriend to be as dumb as she was.

She began to see flaws in herself. Her personality. The way she looked. When she compared her looks to other girls at school, she felt like she looked like a pile of garbage. She was quiet. She preferred to listen and observe. Mike wanted to talk. He wanted to share his knowledge. She was nothing like him. Would that make him stop loving her? Not to mention that she had lost her powers. Her powers were her only redeemable quality, and they were lost to oblivion.

She thought back to Mike's Thanksgiving visit. It didn't seem like her thoughts were true. *Angelic.* A word Mike had used to describe *her*, of all people. The way he looked at her. How he never focused on anything but her when they were together. Hell, even when they

were broken up he was still greatly concerned for her and her safety.

Inside, El knew how Mike felt about her, yet school was wearing her mental stability down. She was doubting herself. She really wished Mike was there to hold her, to comfort her. She felt bad for ending the call like that. She stood up and dialed his number again. After ringing for a while, someone finally answered.

"Hello?" It was Mike.

"Mike? It's me."

"Oh, hey. Is something up?"

She sniffled. "I'm sorry."

"What for?"

"Mike," she let out a small sob. "School is hard." she sniffed "I keep doubting myself. I keep doubting you."

"Hey, hey. It's okay. I know. I understand. School is a pain in the ass for me too,"

"It is?"

"Of course it is. It's not like I'm *popular*. I'm weird. And I never focus because I'm usually thinking about you." She heard him let out a small huff of a laugh. "I'm here, El. If you want to talk to someone, you can talk to me. You can tell me anything. I love you."

She smiled through her tears. "I love you too, so much." she wiped the tears from her eyes. "I'll call you next week, okay?"

"I'll be waiting."

"Bye."

.....

-Two weeks later-

Mike waited by the phone yet again, awaiting El's call. She had

promised to call him before she left for the airport. He was anxious to see her. She was so close to arriving and he was getting fidgety. As soon as El arrived he would take her in his arms and kiss her like there was no tomorrow. Mike's mother and Joyce had arranged that the Byers would be staying here. El would be sleeping in his room. He was also excited to play a long-awaited campaign of D&D now that the entire party would be together again.

He felt like he had done well on his midterms. Sure, he wasn't focused a lot of the time, but he still tried his best and the questions weren't too hard. School had been a bit more bearable this week now that El would be coming in a few days.

The phone rang and he quickly picked it up. "Hey. You guys leaving now?"

"Yes. I'm excited to see you."

He smiled "It's going to be the greatest Christmas ever." he said. "I have so many things planned." he paused. "How did your tests go?"

"I didn't understand most of it. I don't really understand most of school. Maybe I did alright."

"Maybe when you come over I can help you with some of your schoolwork. Did you get homework over the break?"

"Yes."

"Great. Hopefully, I'll be able to help." God, he just wanted her to be happy. He wanted to help her life become easier in whatever way he could. It was the least he could do for her. She was so amazing and perfect.

"I have to go, Mike. We're leaving."

"Okay, I'll see you soon! Bye."

After they hung up, Mike collapsed onto his bed, his mind buzzing with thoughts of El. He really didn't think he was worthy of her love. She was too beautiful and too adorable and too sweet and perfect for his brain to even register. What the hell did she see in him? He was a

scrawny little nobody.

He just wanted to cuddle up with her under some blankets. They would watch a movie together and then make out, her lips sweet as candy. They would snuggle into each other's arms and fall asleep together on the couch, listening to the crackle of the fireplace. The multicolored glow of the Christmas lights on the Christmas tree would float in the cozy atmosphere and the smell of freshly baked gingerbread cookies would fill the air.

At night they would tuck themselves into bed, turning out the lights and letting the buttery glow of the moon illuminate the room as they kissed. They would tell each other loving things and he would stare at her in his dumbass way, admiring her sheer beauty.

Winter break would be amazing. It would be stress-free. It would be the winter of love.

A/N: Ayo! I hope you enjoyed this shorter chapter! I just kinda used it to set the scene for arc 2 which is coming up very, very soon! But guys, I'm torn. Nothing in ST goes without conflict for long. Do you guys want this fic to be conflict-free? Do you want a new threat to arise? If so, what ideas do you have? Let me know what you think in the comments/reviews. See you soon!

7. Chapter 7

A/N: Heyo babes. Welcome to arc 2! The long-awaited Christmas arc. Big thancc to birbbroski again for helping me revise! Sorry about the delay my children! I've had a lot of shit going on this week and haven't had a lot of time to get writing done. I do want to add some kind of conflict in arc 2 tho. My original plan was to somehow involve a threat from the upside down, but I don't have the planning skills to actually create a moving plot with a solution that involves monsters and shit, so I may add some kind of threat to their relationship? Most likely some hurt/comfort, dealing with insecurities and such. I take inspo from the Special Series by Constantius on A03, so props to them for the help also go read their mileven fics bc they're like the best mileven fics I've ever read and they're what inspired me to start this fic! (Note: I changed the rating of this story to T to fit the themes)

A/N from Brokeski: lmao kinda went kerchow for a lil don't mind that school's just kicking my ass but aye victory royale am I right or am I right (I'm so sorry, I'm not high nor am I a twelve year old boy I'm just... well I don't know)

The Byers finally arrived in Hawkins, El looking excitedly outside the taxi's window, a rush of memories flooding back to her as they passed by the houses in Mike's neighborhood. She pressed her fingertips against the glass window, feeling the freezing temperature outside through the pane. She had dressed warmly for the occasion. It wouldn't be as cold here as it was in Maine, but nonetheless, she wore multiple layers.

She was tingling with excitement. Winter break promised good things to come, especially with her and Mike. He had said he had a lot of things planned. She was quite tired from her plane ride tough, and really just wanted to snuggle up warm in Mike's arms when she got home. *Home*. There it was again. Hawkins was her home. Mike was her home. She was home now. She smiled.

As the taxi pulled up to the Wheeler household, El was snapped out of her daze. She saw a cold Mike sitting on the stairs just outside of his house. Her heart did a backflip. Mike had waited out in the

freezing cold just to be there when she arrived. His face lit up when he saw the taxi pull into the driveway, jumping to his feet.

El wasted no time. She quickly unbuckled herself from the seatbelt, throwing the car door open and scrambling outside. The air was sharp and cold, but she paid no mind to it. She didn't even bother to get her bag from the trunk. She ran across the frosted grass of the lawn, finally reaching Mike and wrapped her arms around him.

She tangled her hands in his hair, kissing him. They broke apart after a few seconds. "Hi." she smiled at him. He returned the smile. "Hi." She released him, her hands sliding down to his as they laced their fingers. He felt freezing. He must have been waiting for a long time. "You're cold," she said.

"Yeah. We should probably go inside."

She bit her lip and nodded, watching as Joyce, Will, and Johnathan all walked over to the front door, carrying luggage for the next two weeks. *Two weeks*. Not three days. Two whole weeks of her, Mike, and the rest of the party. Mike held the door open for everyone, and they stepped into the warm house.

They set their bags on the floor momentarily to greet Mike, sharing quick hugs. Mike's mother emerged from the kitchen, smiling at her visitors. "Welcome!" She and Joyce shared a quick, friendly hug. "Dinner is going to be ready in about half an hour. I'll get Nancy to show you where you will be sleeping."

El quickly grabbed her bag from the ground, slinging it over her shoulder and smiling over at Mike. All of her worries melted away.

....

Everyone got settled into their rooms, Mike taking El's hand to bring her to his room. El was giggling adorably as she set her bag down on the floor and they hopped onto Mike's bed. They sat crossed-legged across from each other, both wearing mad grins on their faces.

"How was the trip over here?"

"Okay. I was excited to get here." El responded.

Mike leaned himself forward to give her a quick kiss. "I'm glad you're here." he smiled, holding her hands in his. "We're going to have so much fun. After dinner, the rest of the party is coming over and we're going to play some D&D in the basement. Just like old times!"

She grinned and nodded. God, she was so beautiful. It had been almost a month since Mike had last seen her, and his brain was still trying to register her beauty. Her flowing brown hair that reached right below her shoulders, her soft lips, sharp features, long legs, breasts. All of her was simply breathtaking.

El yawned, collapsing to lay on her side, facing Mike, and he soon followed suit. "What else are we doing while I'm here?" she asked, hugging the blanket around her.

"Well, tomorrow we're finally going to decorate our Christmas tree. We *are* a bit late, but I really wanted to wait for you so that we could do it together." he smiled. "And then another day maybe we could go ice skating? I'm not too great at it but it's fun once you get the hang of it. Maybe we can bake cookies one day? Oh, and I think it's supposed to snow in a few days." he scratched his neck. "Sorry, I'm rambling. It's your first *actual* Christmas with me, and I want everything to be perfect. You missed out on so many Christmases, and we should make up for it."

El's face lit up obviously intrigued by the countless ideas Mike had planned for her visit. He silently prayed that everything would work out. El had gone through so much shit in the past and had probably never had a proper Christmas. Mike just wanted her to be happy. She deserved a normal life. She didn't do anything to deserve the things she had been through.

Evidently, El was strong. Not only physically, but emotionally. She had made it through countless years of horrible events but was able to see through the haze of her past. She did not need her powers to be a loving and lovable person. She fell in love with Mike. She became part of a friend group. She became part of a family. She could be normal and happy if Mike helped her, pushed her in the right direction, away from the gray past and into the bright future.

.....

El was being pulled from reality again. It was beautiful. After her devastating mental breakdown from a couple of weeks ago, she needed a break from life. Being around Mike, kissing him, made all of her stress and shame disappear. She felt like nobody and everybody.

Through the dreamy clouds in her mind, in a back corner sat her insecurities. Her doubts. Her lies. They were there, and would always be there whether El liked it or not. They were an infestation of unwanted emotions in her brain. Some thoughts influenced by kids at her school, while others were her own independent thoughts. They whispered to her in her sleep. During class. At any given point away from Mike, they chanted to her. She knew what was true, yet they wanted to convince her otherwise. *You are an idiot. You are not pretty. Mike is lying to you. He probably doesn't want you. Why would he after everything that has happened. You broke up with him for virtually no reason. You treated him like shit. You lose your powers. Wouldn't things be easier to just run away?*

Usually when around Mike, the whispers were silenced. Evidence that directly contradicted their ideas was being presented right in front of El. It filled her mind with bright clouds. The clouds were the same thing that made tingles go from her head to her feet, the same thing that made her heart feel like it was going to combust, and then freeze, and then combust again. The clouds of Mike's affection carried her away from reality.

By the time Mrs. Wheeler had called them down for dinner, they had been cuddling and making out for what felt like years. The infestation of insecurities barely existed in her mind at this point. El still felt tingles in her spine, even when they got downstairs to eat. El sat next to Mike at the dinner table, where freshly made lasagna waited for her. She ate quietly, preferring to listen to the conversations of others than to speak herself. She had a rather awkward conversation with Mike's mother, and El answered her questions in as few words as possible.

Mike glanced over at El at some point during dinner, lacing his fingers with hers as they held hands under the table. Mike quickly looked over at Will, and then looked back at his mother.

"Mom, can me, El, and Will be excused? We have to set up for D&D

in the basement before our friends get here."

Mrs. Wheeler agreed, and the three stood up and made their way to the basement. El's heart was beating with anticipation. She hadn't been down there in years. The basement was her first true home. They made their way down the stairs, and memories flooded back to El in a swarm.

She used to sit under the blanket fort that miraculously was still standing, waiting for Mike to return home. He would return. He would give her Eggos and tell her about the wonders of life. He treated her with such care and tenderness. He still did. Those were the times when they were figuring each other out. The times when they realized they had a great fondness for each other.

El silently sat on the couch as Mike and Will began setting up the game. She looked up and around the basement, seeing how almost nothing had changed. It still gave off a cozy, warm glow.

After a few minutes of waiting, the rest of the party arrived. They all gave each other warm greetings, some settling onto the couch while others simply knelt on the floor by the table, eager to start the game. Mike was sitting next to El on the couch, and he looked over at her, gaze softening. "You wanna play? I can teach you the rules. It's kinda confusing, but you're really smart. It'll be easy."

As much as El wanted to play, she was far too tired for her brain to comprehend much. It had been a long day and D&D seemed pretty complicated. She decided to pass on his offer. She shook her head no. "No thank you." she gave Mike a small smile. "I'm tired. I'll watch."

Mike nodded understandingly. The game began, and El was half-paying attention the whole time. She was trying to follow along with what was going on, but at some point, her mind drifted off, and when she tried tuning back in, what her friends were saying didn't make that much sense anymore. Every few minutes Mike would turn his attention towards El, looking at her in a way that made her heart go crazy.

A couple of hours in, some of their friends announced their departure. "Yeah, dude if I'm not home by nine I'm going to get in

trouble," Lucas explained.

"C'mon guys, we just started!" Will protested.

Dustin frowned. "Sorry, man."

Once everyone left, Will sighed, glancing over at Mike and El who were snuggled up on the couch together, gazing into each other's eyes. Will, sighed, walking back up the stairs to leave Mike and El be.

Meanwhile, the couple held each other, smiles plastered to both of their faces. El was pressed close to Mike, feeling his breath warm on his neck. The room was a bit cold, but Mike was warm so she didn't care. Her eyelids drifted down, begging to close as sleep sang is coaxing song to her, luring her to simply close her eyes. She lifted her head to kiss Mike, but it only lasted a few seconds. Her mind was getting groggy and her eyes drifted closed at last.

.....

Within a few minutes, El was sleeping soundly in Mike's arms. God, she was adorable. He debated on whether to just fall asleep on the couch or to carry El back up to his room. He decided they would be more comfortable in his room, where the lights were off and there was a cozy bed.

As gingerly as he could, he picked up El, positioning one arm under her knees and the other under her back, standing up and carrying her bridal style. El didn't seem to mind, as she adjusted accordingly, wrapping her arms around his neck and relaxing into his hold, keeping her eyes shut.

Mike gently carried her up the basement stairs, and then up more stairs to his room. He gently set her on his bed, a bit out of breath after carrying her. Mike wasn't the strongest kid. He snuggled up under the covers with El, wrapping his arms around her as they faced each other. He could just barely see her face through the pale moonlight shining in through the window, and he smiled a bit. She was so perfect.

Mike went to sleep, feeling El's warmth as he held her tenderly. His

mind was full of excitement for the days to come. When it all came together all that would really matter during these next couple of weeks would be El's happiness. He wanted her to be happy and to forget about all of her troubles and insecurities and just *be with him*. If only those ideas could be reality forever.

A/N: Alright kids! That about wraps up chapter 7! Chapters in arc 2 may be a bit shorter bc there are gonna be so many of them and I dont get a lot of time to write, so please be patient! This did take me a while to post and its not as long as I was hoping, but hopefully ya'll enjoyed. Let me know what other things you wanna see in this arc! What are your ideas for conflict? I'm open to discuss anything and I wanna hear your ideas and opinions on what's next to come. Bye homie!